



Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine

97-1 | 2009

Semaine alpine 2008 : innover (dans) les Alpes

Examining innovation in the Alps at the local scale

A region on the move, the “Pays des Ecrins”

Philippe Bourdeau



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rga/797>

DOI: 10.4000/rga.797

ISSN: 1760-7426

Publisher

Association pour la diffusion de la recherche alpine

Printed version

Date of publication: 26 May 2009

ISSN: 0035-1121

Electronic reference

Philippe Bourdeau, « Examining innovation in the Alps at the local scale », *Revue de Géographie Alpine / Journal of Alpine Research* [Online], 97-1 | 2009, Online since 24 June 2009, connection on 30 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rga/797> ; DOI : 10.4000/rga.797



La *Revue de Géographie Alpine* est mise à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

Examining innovation in the Alps at the local scale : A region on the move, the "Pays des Écrins"

Philippe Bourdeau

INSTITUT DE GÉOGRAPHIE ALPINE
UMR PACTE Grenoble
philippe.bourdeau@ujf-grenoble.fr

Abstract: The Pays des Écrins, which hosted the 2008 Alpine Week, is an emblematic mountain region of the French Alps that has to adapt in the face of numerous endogenous and exogenous crises and changes. Questions relating to creativity and innovation are thus raised in a structural manner and can be seen both as an injunction and a means to developing resour-

ces. Based on a review of the path taken by this region over the past twenty years, this paper examines the geo-historical and geo-cultural underpinnings of innovation in a context of local heritage and tourism development.
Keywords: region, innovation, creativity, tourism, sustainable development.



Context

The Pays des Écrins was selected to host the 2008 Alpine Week because it seemed an appropriate location to illustrate the beginnings of a response to the questions raised by innovation in mountain areas. The argument put forward by the organisers on this occasion underlined the creative capacities that have accompanied the profound changes that have affected this region over the past twenty years. The regeneration of Argentière-la-Bessée, the canton's main town and administrative centre, following the brutal decline of industry in the second half of the 1980s, appears as a key factor in this development, particularly as it took place in a context of change in the local geo-touristic system. Strong local dynamics, combining cultural and socio-economic creativity, institutional agility or inventiveness, the affirmation of a "project territory", and the emergence of political leadership and media visibility were a few of the tangible signs of a change and a movement that might be interpreted in terms of innovation: firstly in the general sense of introducing novelty, then, to a certain extent, in the more limited sense of a diffusion process of a novelty in terms of practices and spatial distribution. Starting from the hypothesis of a strong value that is illustrative of this mountain area, we examine the factors and conditions governing an ordinary innovation (Alter, 2000) at the local scale. Following a review of the main changes affecting the Pays des Écrins over the past 25 years, we will briefly examine how this area can be represented as a creative outsider within the French Alps, before outlining and discussing several possible interpretations of its capacity for innovation¹.

¹ The research on which this article is based was financed by the Institut de la montagne as part of a programme concerning territorial governance in mountain resorts (Gouvernance territoriale dans les stations de montagne) (Gerbaux et Al., 2007).

Symbols of profound change in the Pays des Écrins (1985-2009)

The Pays des Écrins corresponds to both the canton of Argentière-la-Bessée and the Community of communes of the Argentiérois, comprising nine communes² situated to the south of Briançon, in the French Hautes-Alpes department. From a geo-economic point of view, the Pays des Écrins was marked in the 20th century by the development of a double polarity: large-scale industrial plants and small-scale traditional activities in the Durance valley, agriculture and tourism in the adjacent valleys of Vallouise and Fressinières.

The industrial decline and reconversion of Argentière-la-Bessée, the market town of the Pays des Écrins, has already been the subject of detailed study (Cowburn and Sciblo-Jaillet, 1995; Donert and Light D., 1996) and will therefore not be dealt with any further here. Let us simply note that final closure of the Pechiney aluminium plant in 1986, which had been the economic and urban heart of the region, led to a deep economic, demographic, social and political crisis as well as one of local identity: direct loss of 334 jobs, decline of 15 % in the population of the commune³, and even a deconstruction of the municipal council since a large proportion of the elected representatives were managers at the plant.

This “end of the world” situation was exacerbated by the virtual complete failure, in less than three years, of the 70 million franc industrial reconversion plan financed by Pechiney with the support of the public authorities. Indeed, it was this bitter failure and increasing doubts about the industrial vocation of the commune that made a redevelopment project to promote tourism and heritage activities all the more credible. Previously, such activities had only been mentioned in a very hypothetical manner, giving rise to disbelief and distrust by many of the local population as well as local actors and observers. From then on, thanks to strong leadership through from a new and younger municipal council, together with the dynamism of an emerging group of new local economic operators (guides, hoteliers and innkeepers, shopkeepers, publishers...), Argentière-la-Bessée deliberately refocused its activities on its mountain environment. This approach, embodied in the formula “history, nature, sport”, was based on a consultant’s report commissioned in 1990 and was aimed at making Argentière “the gateway to the high mountains” by systematically taking the opposite course to that of a century of virtual industrial monoactivity and isolation with respect to the nearby mountains. Within the framework of a plurianual tourism development plan launched at the beginning of the 1990s, the refocusing of Argentière on the mountains was thus largely based on developing the potential of the rich and unexploited natural and cultural resources offered by the Durance valley (gorges, running water), the Fournel valley (rocks, ice, canyons, mining and floral heritage) and the proximity of popular tourist meccas in the Vallouise valley.

² Saint-Martin-de Queyrières, L’Argentière-la-Bessée, La Roche-de-Rame, Champcella, Fressinières, Les Vigneaux, Puy-Saint-Vincent, Vallouise, Pelvoux. For a description of the Pays des Écrins, see http://www.cc-paysdesEcrins.com/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=8, consulted on 11/03/2009.

³ From 2497 to 2191 inhabitants, with a migratory deficit of 448 for the inter-census period of 1982-1990.

Main indicators of the redevelopment of Argentière-la-Bessée (1989-2009)

- Creation of a Centre of scientific, technological and industrial culture (CCSTI), oriented at first toward the region's mining heritage (exploration, development and opening to the public of silver-bearing lead mines that constituted the origin of the commune's first industrial activity), then to its electro-metallurgical and winemaking heritage.

- Development of climbing paths, several via ferrata and a white-water course over the entire commune, including facilities close to the town centre and industrial installations.

- Establishment of sports events of international level (Ice climbing event, Les Écrins Open climbing event, canoe-kayak competitions...).

- Arrival of numerous professional tourism operators (guides, monitors, etc.) who were totally absent from the commune beforehand.

- Creation of a regional training centre for activities related to running water in partnership with the French Federation of canoe-kayaking (FFCK).

- Creation of mountain sports clubs: Climbing Club (FACE), Club alpin français (FFCAM), Écrins Snowboard...

- Membership of the "Plus beaux détours de France" (most beautiful detours of France) network.

- Adoption of a logo showing the Barre des Écrins (4103 m.), the highest point of the massif situated in the commune of Pelvoux, in the Vallouise valley.

- Installation of numerous tourist signs on routes.

- Creation of the Editions du Fournel, publishing house specialising in tourism, the mountains and the region.

- Changing the name of the railway station to Argentière-les-Écrins.

- Installation of the "biggest ice axe in the world" in front of the Town Hall.

- Systematic reference to the world of mountain sports in naming streets and squares (rue des cascades de glace, rue Edward Whymper, place René Desmaison...)...

In one decade (1990-2000), this deliberate refocusing took on numerous forms in the area of facility planning and development, but also from a socio-economic and geocultural point of view (see insert below).

Against a backdrop of increasingly diverse mountain sports activities, particularly in the summer, the growth of sports tourism in Argentière-la-Bessée during the 1980-90 period contributed to a profound change in the local geotouristic system. Thus, as in most of the mountain massifs, the Pays des Écrins was marked by the development of recreational activities that were peripheral to the high mountain areas. The development of climbing sites, paragliding, via ferrata, adventure parks in forest areas, canyoning itineraries, and white-water courses enabled a recentring of activities that benefited the valley bottoms and the villages and areas around the resort of Puy-Saint-Vincent. In some cases, as with river-based sports or mountain biking, this development could be explained by hydrographical and topographic factors. But such developments and the sports activities underpinning them were also related to new ways of looking at recreational time-space, its social nature and its styles (interest in sites that until then had been neglected, interest in practicing activities over shorter time periods, requiring shorter access times, multi-activities, more family-oriented activities, and those more focused on body movements than on the environment) while at the same time respecting the restrictions imposed by the regulations of the Écrins National Park⁴. This tourism offer, which was both complementary and alternative to those based on traditional reasons for visiting the mountains, gradually became a decisive component of local tourism. With the help of the concerted efforts to develop tourism in Argentière-la-Bessée, it contributed to a more balanced spatial development of local tourism in favour of the downstream areas.

Understanding territorial “inventiveness”

THE PAYS DES ÉCRINS : A CREATIVE OUTSIDER?

An inventory of the most significant creations over the past twenty years in the Pays des Écrins provides us with a list of operations or events of variable scale that bears witness to the region's distinct capacity for launching or welcoming experimentation:

Creation of the concept of a via ferrata for sports enthusiasts with the introduction of the first French itinerary by the guide Lionel Condemine at Freissinières (1989), followed by the creation of a second itinerary at Les Vigneaux (1992);

Signature of the first Natura 2000 convention between the State and a local authority (valley of Fournel-Les Bans, Argentière-la-Bessée, 2002);

Preliminary study of the first Local Agenda 21 focused on sports tourism with scientific backing from the Institut de Géographie Alpine (Argentière-la-Bessée, 2005-2006);

⁴ Cf. particularly the regulations concerning the practice of paragliding and mountain biking, as well as the equipping/installation of climbing routes in the central zone.

Carrying out of first voluntary SCOT (schéma de cohérence territoriale) project in France and setting up of a sustainable development plan (Pays des Écrins, 2004-2006);

Obtaining of “centre of rural excellence” quality label on the theme of a “Region of water”: development through rehabilitation, awareness programmes and the setting up of a water network with all the everyday, industrial, heritage and recreational uses of water (Pays des Écrins, 2006);

Implementation of an experimental environmental analysis in the resort of Pelvoux-Valloise (Interreg Dynalp2 programme, 2007-2008, Pays des Écrins);

Second French commune to join the “Alliance dans les Alpes” (Argentière-la-Bessée, 2006), followed later by the collective membership of the Pays des Écrins;

First estimated carbon balance in the context of the candidature of Pelvoux-Écrins to be the French candidate – on the theme of “back to beginnings” – for the Winter Olympic Games of 2018 (2009)⁵.

Apart from a reference to the notion of sustainable development, the creativity observed in the region has been accompanied by substantial reflection not only on the question of observing change, but also on the understanding of the meaning of action and on the best way to make use of experience acquired: conference on “Natura 2000 and local authorities” (2002), Dynalp2 seminar “ski resorts: environmental assessment and diversification” (2007), meetings on transalpine routes (2008), Alpine Week (2008), support provided for numerous French and foreign university studies, commissioning of numerous audits and assessments in numerous fields: economy, environment, tourism, sport, heritage. This list can be further extended by adding all the analyses, consultancy studies and participative approaches conducted between 2005 and 2006 within the framework of the SCOT⁶ project that helped orient the Pays des Écrins towards the model of a “learning territory” (Jambes, 2003). Similarly, the development sought encouraged openness, exchange and partnership with entities outside the territory: membership of Alliance dans les Alpes network, relations with other alpine regions within the framework of cross-border cooperative arrangements and Interreg projects, participation in the Via Alpina project, reception/welcoming of international youth workshops or researchers and groups of French and foreign students.

⁵ This carbon balance is available at: http://www.mountain-riders.org/_bureauEtude/docs/BilanCarbone-Pelvoux.pdf, consulté le 11/03/2009.

⁶ Project that was not completed but that could be seen as a “useful failure” given the participative approach adopted and the appropriation of a shared territorial diagnosis. See: http://www.cc-paysdesEcrins.com/article.php?id_article=85, consulted 11/03/2009.

Some suggestions for understanding change and innovation at the local scale

AN ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF THE REGION'S GEO-HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Although constructing an appropriate historical framework is beyond the scope of this study, it may nevertheless be observed that the pre-modern period of the Pays des Écrins was marked by at least two events with a strong impact on local collective memory: the Vaudoise heresy, between the 13th and 16th centuries (Audisio, 1998), and the political autonomy of the Escartons (14th to 18th centuries). The influence of these events on local identity must be taken into consideration, particularly from the point of view of a certain resistance to what is the norm, institutional originality, cultural wealth and a tradition of openness to the outside – Switzerland and Italy for the Vaudois, Italy for the Escartons. The first English mountaineers who visited the valleys of the Pays des Écrins in the 19th century were guided by the memory of the Vaudois and the persecutions they suffered.

This context of dissidence and originality later reappears in other experiences such as the creation of a pioneer training course for teachers in Dormillouse, in the Fressinières valley, by the Pastor Félix Neff between 1826 and 1828 (Siestrunk, 2003) and, a century later, the arrival of libertarian communist teacher, Célestin Freinet, who during his house arrest in Vallouise from 1941 to 1944 wrote four works that laid the foundations of his alternative pedagogy, before creating pioneer “snow” classes there at the beginning of the 1960s (Lafon-Bottaro, 1999). In the 1970s, it was a community experience influenced by Lanza del Vasto that brought life to the hamlet of Dormillouse, at the same time that the entire Briançonnais area was witnessing the influx of a population of “neo rurals” and was within the sphere of influence of the cooperative of anarchist origin, Longo Mai. Then in the 1990-2000 period, the Pays des Écrins saw the arrival of professionals in the tourism trade with ecotourism activities, as well as a significant development of market gardening and “bio” produce.

AN ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF PERIPHERAL INNOVATION

The theoretical and empirical contributions of studies of atypical forms of innovation underline the fact that beyond the numerous constraints on the mobilisation of resources, a bordering, peripheral or marginal position benefits from an attenuation of the factors of coherence that define the legitimate forms of action in a territory (Antheau and Giraut, 2005). This “disengagement” from the norms may prove to be very creative in that it stimulates the capacity of the actors concerned to find cultural, economic, institutional, or identity arrangements, to negotiate dispensations or to undertake experiments to find alternative solutions. This brings us back to the analysis that presents innovation as a form of deviance from the “everyday” by individuals and groups who are often aty-

pical and even dissident, who contravene rules to reach objectives that are not legitimate and may in this way contribute to a reversal of the norms (Alter, 2000).

The stimulating effects and non-conformist creativity linked to this process may be found in the term outsider – with the double meaning of a maverick and a challenger – which very often defines the status of the Pays des Écrins with respect to different projects and events: creation of a national mountaineering centre of the Federation of French alpine clubs in Pelvoux (2006), organisation of the Alpine Week (2008), candidature for the Winter Olympic Games (2009).

AN ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF “CREATIVE CRISIS”

The de-industrialization of Argentièrre-la-Bessée at the end of the 1980s was reflected in a profound destabilisation of the economic, demographic, social and political system as well as the shock to local, and to a certain extent, cantonal identity. The plan adopted to confront the crisis corresponds perfectly to the decisional type of model adopted for tourism development in the Alps (Bozonnet, Guérin et Herbin, 1986). Tourism is thus mobilised as a consensual area of intervention for local authorities in that is based on an ideology of progress, is likely to produce extensive spin-off effects on different sectors of the economy and jobs while at the same time helping strengthen local identity.

Following this line of reasoning, the direct and indirect effects of a crisis provide room to manoeuvre for a regeneration and requalification of the region. In Argentièrre, this process was mainly reflected in the increased availability of land and real estate property. Pechiney company housing was thus bought by the commune for a symbolic franc and then resold at a reasonable price to buyers originating from the Briançonnais region. The demographic impact was considerable and was reflected first of all in an increase in population, with the number of inhabitants (2375) in the commune in 2008 climbing back to almost 1982 levels. The change, however, was also reflected in a clear socio-demographic renewal during the 1990-1999 period, with a very strong growth in middle-class professions (+ 47, 1 %) and the managerial and upper intellectual professions (+ 25 %)⁷. In addition to its impact on house prices and demographic trends, this new population also provided overwhelming support for the commune redevelopment project by helping to reinforce it.

The area's resilience was also reflected in terms of resources: the need to adapt and create imposed by the crisis gave rise to a re-examination of the potential of space that manifested itself not only in a redeployment of space within an enlarged “useful space” (valley of the Fournel river, old silver mines, Durance gorges, Rocher des Hermes...) but also by a transposition and reorganisation of cultural and physical resources. Although these

⁷ Over the same period, the figures are even more spectacular regarding the level of schooling, with the population of those obtaining the equivalent of a higher school leaving certificate + 2 more years (Bac + 2) increasing by 331 %, and those with an advanced higher school leaving certificate + 2 more years increasing by 193 % (Source: INSEE).

resources did not change, they were “remobilised” within a context of new uses: the rock changed its status from that of a mineral to one of support for climbers, while water changed from an electrical power resource to one supporting ice climbing or canoe kayaking.

AN ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF CREATIVE “ENTRE-DEUX”

The rhetorical figure of “entre-deux” (between two) developed by Daniel Sibony provides a basis for rethinking the functions of secant links within which new paths and passages develop between the two terms that make up a relationship (Sibony, 1991). This perspective corresponds well to the notion of betweenness proposed by Nicholas Entrikin (Entrikin, 1991). Little referred to by French geographers, the “entre-deux” concept indeed appears as a particularly creative means for exploring and translating the many socio-spatial and socio-territorial relational schemas which are characterised by dualities, ambiguities or hybridizations where differences are played out again and frontiers become blurred in a way that is characteristic of territorial post modernity: touristic - non-touristic place, town-mountain, resort – outside of resort, sport – heritage, holiday stay – residence, summer-winter, protection-development (Bourdeau, 2007).

From this perspective, the Pays des Écrins seems very illustrative of a certain number of emerging figures, of transitional and temporary situations that throw light on the reorganisation and creativity at work at different geographical scales and on different registers: “between lavender and glaciers”⁸, Northern Alps and Southern Alps, Briançonnais-Embrunais regions, Durance and tributary valleys, upstream and downstream, resort and villages, industry and tourism. By integrating sports activities into the heart of the town (climbing competition on artificial blocks) or in its immediate periphery (climbing, via ferrata, white water), as in marking out a heritage route through the heart of past and present industrial installations, it is once again “betweenness” that is being reinforced.

Concluding remarks

The path followed by the Pays des Écrins over the past twenty years provides useful insights into the conditions under which a mountain area faced with the uncertainty of change and a major crisis can mobilise its historical, heritage, cultural, social and political resources to reconstruct an identity and a vision of the future that is both shared within the area and recognised outside it. This case study suggests that although innovation is clearly part of a context of change, it is also based on continuity, and sometimes on that which is permanent, which mobilises the constitutive elements of a territory over a long period. Taking into account the socio-historical and cultural background – even if forgotten or neglected by local memory – is therefore important since it is a significant element in analysing the capacity of a territory to produce, diffuse or integrate forms of creativity that can interpreted in terms of innovation.

⁸ Slogan du Comité départemental du tourisme des Hautes-Alpes.

In the fairly impressive list of examples of creativity from the Pays des Écrins region, how then do you distinguish between what is the product of innovation – in the canonical sense of novelty validated by a wide diffusion – and a simple invention? If we adopt this limited definition, only the invention of the concept of *via ferrata* for sports purposes seems to result from a convincing innovation process. Although the impact of this creation is far from negligible in terms of the number of visitors to the Pays des Écrins or its image, simply considering it as an innovation only partially takes into account the local dynamics that finds expression more in terms of experimentation and appropriation of original and inventive solutions, based on a substantial array of formulas and local, national and European measures: Natura 2000, Interreg, Agenda 21, SCOT, centre of rural excellence, carbon balance, etc. In this regard, the contribution of the Pays des Écrins to an innovative process seems not only to rest on its capacity to diffuse novelties (*via ferrata*...) but also to import and implement pioneering devices and practices, an observation that appears to be characteristic of the innovative milieus studied by territorial economics (Maillat et *Al.* 1993).

The remarkable path of Argentièrre-la-Bessée, in terms of its identity as well as its activities, may be seen as a key element in the changes observed in the Pays des Écrins over the past twenty years: from “l’Argentièrre-la-noire” (industrial pollution of the 1970s) to “l’Argentièrre-la-Bessée” (deindustrialization of the 1980s) and “l’Argentièrre, porte de la haute montagne” (Argentièrre, gateway to the high mountains), the slogan adopted in 1994, a territorial rethinking and recomposition has taken place without any modifications to the limits of the commune or canton. But the stimulus and sometimes the motor provided by the town has been only one of the elements active in a process in which each specific entity of the Pays des Écrins has participated: Fressinières, Puy-Saint Vincent, Vallouise-Pelvoux, communes of la Durance – La Roche-de-Rame and Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières. From an initial distinct fragmentation between the Durance and the secondary valleys, downstream and upstream, industry and tourism, and town and village, a gradual reorganisation has occurred resulting in a more balanced system of links, functions and identity and a new socio-spatial organisation in terms of everyday life, residential practices, economic activity and territorial identity.

Thus, looking at the Pays des Écrins region as a whole over the period of time considered, a quadruple transition appears to have taken place:

From a reactive strategy, caused by the industrial crisis of Argentièrre-la-Bessée, to a proactive strategy that manifests itself, for example, in the voluntary SCOT project or the candidature for the Winter Olympic Games of 2018;

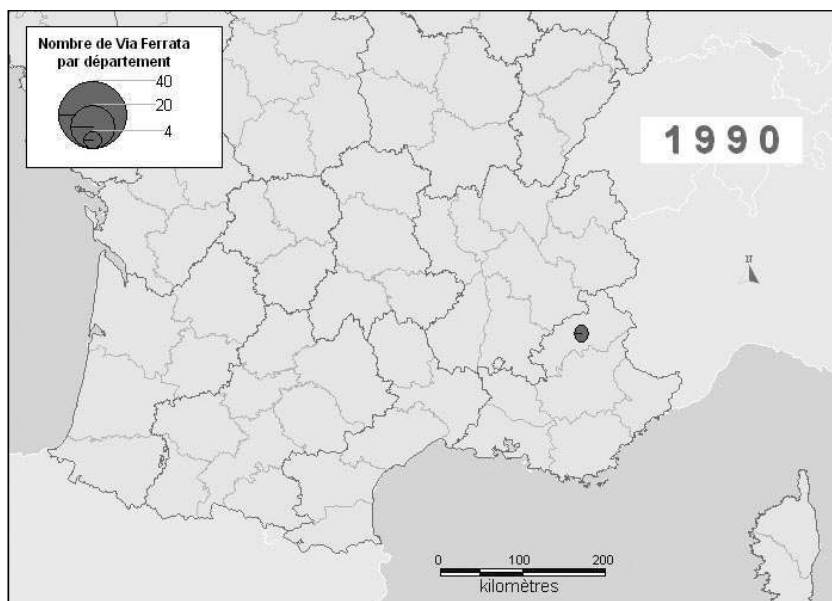
From one-off projects commissioned by the commune (Argentièrre) to intercommunal projects commissioned by the Community of communes that promotes shared actions at the scale of the territory as a whole;

From experimental procedures implemented on an adhoc and trial basis (a project, a creation, an event...), often by individuals with the profile of entrepreneur /developer, to organised systematic procedures, programmed and professionalized within the fra-

metwork of the regional authorities (Centre of scientific, technical and industrial culture, Community of communes, Tourism Bureau of Pays des Écrins...) ;

From an endocentric creative procedure, with development focused on boosting the local economy and identity, to an exocentric procedure with the focus more on the competitive positioning of the region in relation to the exterior (other tourist destinations, other towns that are candidates for the Olympic Games).

Through its capacity to produce and to accept an ordinary innovation and to implement it in a project, the Pays des Écrins appears to be a suitable mountain region, among others, for observing a comprehensive change that takes the form of a socio-economic transfer from industry towards cultural and service activities (heritage, tourism, training, public buildings and works sector), a reorganisation of the scales of operation (from commune to community of communes), as well as a redefinition of the respective status of market towns, resorts, valleys and their relations. In the end, the innovation issue hardly seems to be a question of the creation or emblematic one-off operation of an experimental hit parade of ideas, albeit substantial, whether it concerns unexpected successes – via ferrata – or projects that have not yet produced results, such as local Agenda 21 themes or SCOT projects. It seems to be more part of the slow appropriation, transposition and territorial “translation” of a process of change that is gradually negotiated, shared and worked on within a framework of project intercommunality, in which the market town gradually rediscovers its place thanks to multiple creative initiatives, by taking on not only political leadership but also a wide array of public and private professional skills. In this respect, the collective work carried out in preparing the candidature of the Pays des Écrins for the Winter Olympics of 2018, beyond its trivial appearance or its media dimension, seems to cross a new threshold not only in the preparation and structuring of territorial intelligence but also in the registration of the territory in a common time frame – albeit far off and hypothetical – by going beyond the dyschronies (Alter, 2000) of the present. In this respect, it seems to confirm that if “the present divides, the past and the future unite” (Calame, 1993). Finally, it should not be forgotten that the challenges of communication and territorial marketing give rise to an excess of innovation rhetoric, even though its most convincing and most interesting forms from the point of view of sustainable development do not always claim to be innovations. The many experiments and experiences reported in the third Report on the state of the Alps (CIPRA, 2008) bear witness to this in eloquent fashion.

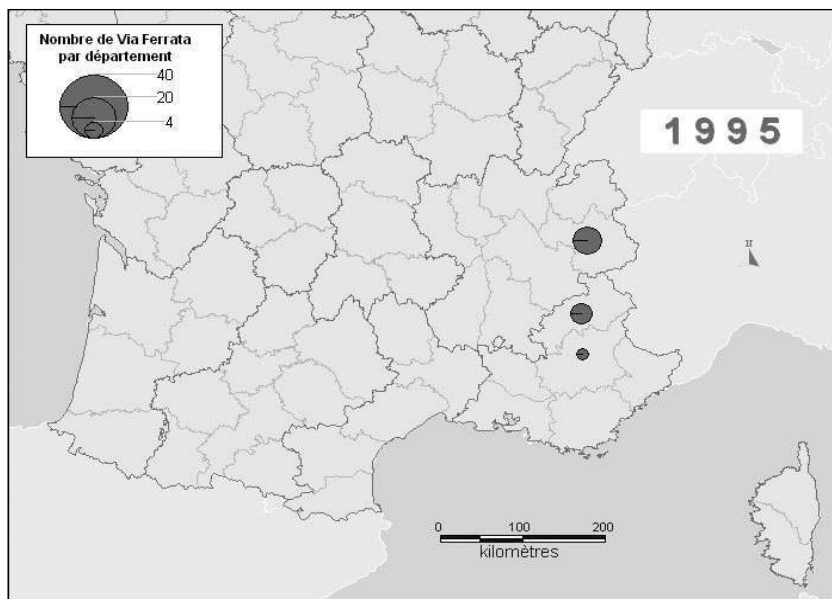


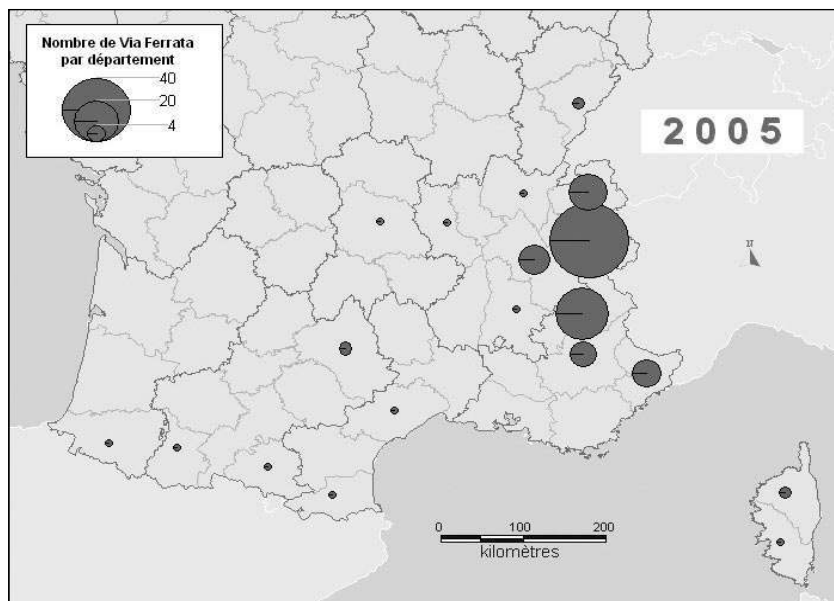
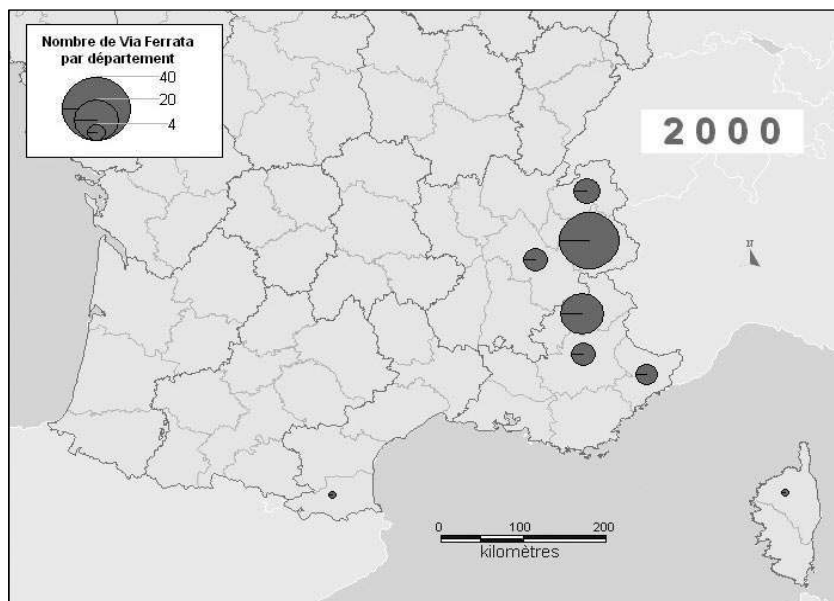
Cartes 1 à 4 : La diffusion des itinéraires de via ferrata en France à partir du pays des Écrins.

Réalisation : Pascal Mao et Nicolas Robinet, Cermosem UJF

Maps 1 and 2 : The diffusion of via ferrata itineraries in France from the Pays des Écrins

Produced by Pascal Mao and Nicolas Robinet, Cermosem UJF





On broie du noir à l'Argentière

• L'ARGENTIERE

La fonderie Pechiney détruite en 7 secondes

7 secondes et un grand fracas ont suffi pour détruire l'un des derniers vestiges de l'industrie de l'aluminium à l'Argentière-la-Bessée.

Certains ont travaillé une quarantaine d'années dans l'édifice. On comprend alors la tristesse de ceux qui vivent dans ce les héritiers de la ferraille et de poussière, ce qui fut leur univers quotidien.

La fermeture de Pechiney n'a pas affecté ses seuls employés. Toute une communauté de travail a été touchée. Les commerçants, les artisans, les autres. Les jeunes, dès qu'ils ont l'âge de voter de leur propre avis, quittent la ville.

Ce n'est pourtant pas la peine de justifier, le noir qui a si longtemps caractérisé l'industrie autour la ville d'Argentière est en train de disparaître. On verra verte ma vallée.

La reconversion n'est pas totalement inefficace. Une chose est sûre : la cité argentine doit apprendre à cultiver tous ses atouts.

X.A.



PECHINEY CONFIRME LA FERMETURE PROGRESSIVE DE L'ARGENTIERE-LA-BESSEE

M. Michel Castera, directeur général de Pechiney, a confirmé, mercredi 16 mai, la fermeture progressive de l'usine d'aluminium de l'Argentière-la-Bessée (Hautes-Alpes), qui emploie 334 personnes (Le Monde du 17 mai).

Le Dauphiné Libéré, 20/10/1988

Le Monde, 18/05/1984



Photographies : P. Bourdeau - 2007



Photographie : P. Bourdeau - 2007

References

- Alter N., 1996. – Sociologie de l'entreprise et de l'innovation. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- Alter N., 2000. – L'innovation ordinaire. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- Apilli E., 2007. – L'ancrage territorial spécifique d'une contre-culture assagie : le snow-board, in Bourdeau (Dir.) Les sports d'hiver en mutation, Hermès-Lavoisier, Paris.
- Antheaume et Giraut (Dir.), 2005. – Le territoire est mort, vive les territoires, IRD, Paris.
- Audisio G., 1998. – Les Vaudois, histoire d'une dissidence, XIIe-XVIe siècles, Fayard, Paris.
- Avocat C., 1979. – Montagnes de lumière (Briançonnais, Embrunais, Queyras, Ubaye), évolution humaine et économique, Imprimerie Fayolle, Villeurbanne, 680 p.
- Blondel D., 2004. – Les enjeux présents et futurs de la répartition mondiale des ressources cognitives. In Michaud Y. (Dir.), Qu'est-ce que la mondialisation, Odile Jacob, Paris, pp. 117-137.
- Bourdeau Ph., 2002. – Approche géo-historique de l'alpinisme pendant l'Occupation : le cas du massif des Écrins (1940-1944). In Le sport et les français pendant l'Occupation (P. Arnaud et Al.), éd. l'Harmattan, Paris, pp. 325-334.
- Bourdeau Ph., 2007. – Les sports de nature comme médiateurs de l'entre-deux ville-montagne : vers un post-tourisme ?, in Monteventi Weber L., Deschenaux C. et Tranda-Pitton M. (dir.), Campagne-ville. Le pas de deux. Enjeux et opportunités des recompositions territoriales. Lausanne : Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes, Lausanne, pp. 27-36.
- Bourdeau et Al., 2007. – Les sports d'hiver en mutation, Hermès-Lavoisier, Paris.
- Bozonnet J.-P., Guérin J.-P., Herbin J., 1986. – La décision touristique, Rapport de recherche, Laboratoire de la montagne alpine, Grenoble.
- Calame P., 1993. – Mission impossible, Ed. Lieu Commun, Paris.
- CIPRA, 2008. – Nous les Alpes ! Des femmes et des hommes façonnent l'avenir. 3ème rapport sur l'état des Alpes. Yves Michel, Gap.
- Cloutier J., 2003. – Qu'est-ce que l'innovation sociale ?, Cahier du C.R.I.S.E.S. n°ET0314, <http://www.crisis.uqam.ca/cahiers/ET0314.pdf>, consulté le 11/03/2009.
- Cowburn I., Sciblo-Jaillet S., 1995. – La géographie socio-historique d'une ville de l'aluminium : l'Argentière-La-Bessée (Hautes-Alpes). Colloque du CTHS, Aix-en-Provence, 9 p.

Donert K., Light D., 1996. – « Capitalizing on Location and Heritage : Tourism and Economic Regeneration in Argentière-la-Bessée, High french Alps », in *Practicing Responsible Tourism, International Case Studies in Tourism Planning, Policy, and Development*, Lynn C. Harrison and Winston Husbands Dir., John Wiley & Sons, Toronto, pp. 193-215.

Cousin S., 2007. – L'argument du développement local par le tourisme. Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales n°170, Le Seuil, Paris, pp. 11-13.

Davézies L., 2008. – La République et ses territoires. La circulation invisible des richesses. Le Seuil, Paris.

Entrikin J.-N., 1991. – The betweenness of place. Towards a geography of modernity. John, Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Fontan J.-M., Klein J.-L., Tremblay D.-G., 2004. – Innovation et société : pour élargir l'analyse des effets territoriaux de l'innovation. In *Géographie Economie Société* n°2, vol. 6, pp. 115-128.

Gerbaux F., Marcelpoil E., Bourdeau Ph., Duboeuf Th., 2007. – La gouvernance territoriale dans les stations de montagne ; une approche pluridisciplinaire. Rapport de recherche à l'Institut de la Montagne, Grenoble.

Guérin J.-P., 1984. – L'aménagement de la montagne en France. Ophrys, Gap.

Hillier J., Moulaert F., Nussbaumer J., 2004. – Trois essais sur le rôle de l'innovation sociale dans le développement territorial. In *Géographie Economie Société* n°2, vol. 6, pp. 129-152.

Homer-Dixon Th., 2000. – The Ingenuity Gap: Facing the Economic, Environmental, and Other Challenges of an Increasingly Complex and Unpredictable Future, Knopf, New York, 2000.

Jambes J.-P., 2003. – Territoires apprenants : esquisses pour le développement local du XXI^e siècle. L'Harmattan, Paris.

Klein J.-L., Harrison D., 2007. – L'innovation sociale. Emergence et effets sur la transformation des sociétés. Presses de l'Université du Québec, Montréal.

Lafon-Bottaro D., 1999. – Célestin Freinet (ou la révolution par l'école), mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Nice/Sophia-Antipolis Faculté de lettres, arts et sciences humaines, Département d'histoire, année universitaire 1998/1999.

Maillat Denis, Quevit M., Senn L., 1993. – Réseaux d'innovation et milieux innovateurs : un pari pour le développement régional. GREMI/EDES, Neuchâtel.

Mao P., Corneloup J., Bourdeau Ph., 2004. – Objets géographiques et formes de développement autour de gorges du Verdon, in Debarbieux B. et Fourny M.-C. dir., *L'effet géographique*, Publications de la MSH-Alpes, Grenoble, pp. 181-196.

Moulier-Boutang Y., 2004. – Mondialisation et main d'œuvre à l'heure du capitalisme cognitif. In Michaud Y. (Dir.), Qu'est-ce que la mondialisation, Odile Jacob, Paris, pp. 139-172.

Porte J.-M., 1992. – L'Argentière à l'heure du Fournel, Montagnes Magazine n° 144, Janvier 1992, pp. 49-57.

Siestrunk R., 2003. – A propos de Freissinières, des Vaudois, de Félix Neff et de quelques autres... Transhumances, Val-des-Prés.

Sibony D., 1991. – Entre-deux. L'origine en partage, Seuil, Paris.

Vitte P., 1998. – Tourisme en espace rural : le territoire à l'épreuve. Revue de Géographie Alpine n°3/1998, Grenoble, pp. 69-85.